POL 14 VIET S.
(1404)

Department of State TELEGRAM

CONFIDENTIAL 530

PAGE 01 SAIGON 14255 01 OF 02 011633Z

EXCISE

42
ACTION EA-15

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 UPW-01 AID-28 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
INR-08 L-04 NSAE-00 NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-20
SSO-00 USIE-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 RSR-01 /113 W
014653

O R 011210Z SEP 70
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5340
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [redacted] DATE 1/26/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 14255

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

KATHMANDU FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER

SUBJECT: UPPER HOUSE ELECTIONS: PRELIMINARY COMMENTS

REF: A. SAIGON 14103 B. SAIGON 14132 C. SAIGON 14140
D. SAIGON 14162 E. SAIGON 14186 ~~ACC~~ POL 14 VIET S.

1. SUMMARY: NEARLY COMPLETE RETURNS SHOW SENATE WINNERS TO BE SLATES OF MAU, CAO AND HUYEN. FAIRNESS OF ELECTION SHOWN BY AN QUANG LIST IN FIRST PLACE. MAU'S VICTORY MAY ALSO ENCOURAGE MILITANT BUDDHISTS TO FOLLOW MORE MODERATE AND CONSTRUCTIVE LINE, SINCE THEY HAVE RECEIVED STAKE IN CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM. ELECTION WAS NOT ISSUE-ORIENTED AND ANY INTERPETATION OF ELECTION AS NATIONAL REFERENDUM WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN. ELECTION DID SHOW DRAWING POWER OF ORGANIZED RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND WELL KNOWN PERSONALITIES. COMPLEXION OF NEW SENATE SHOULD NOT BE FAR DIFFERENT THAN OLD. OPPOSITION LIKELY TO BE MORE VIGOROUSLY LED. END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED 23

2. NEARLY COMPLETE BUT STILL UNOFFICIAL RETURNS AT 5:00 P.M. SEPTEMBER 1 SHOW ELECTION WINNERS TO BE MAU, CAO, AND HUYEN SLATES IN THAT ORDER. NEXT COME SLATES OF LE (MODERATE NHAN XA), HUY (PROGRESSIVE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT), CANH (REVOLUTIONARY DAI VIET, RUNNING STRONGER THAN EXPECTED), BANG (AN QUANG LOWER HOUSE DEPUTY), CUU (OTHER NHAN XA ENTRY), AND JAI (AN QUANG-SUPPORTED LADY SENATOR). GREATER SOLIDARITY FORCE ENTRY OF SENATOR NGUYEN GIA HIEN RAN POORLY, AND WILL PROBABLY FINISH BELOW TENTH PLACE. REPORTEDLY GVN-FAVORED NGUYEN TIEN HY IS AT THIS POINT IN 13TH PLACE.

3. ELECTION RETURNS ALMOST SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES AS EVIDENCE THAT A FAIRLY CONDUCTED ELECTION HAS BEEN HELD HERE.

4. PARTICIPATION OF AN QUANG BUDDHISTS IN THE ELECTION APPEARS AS OF NOW A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT. THIS MOST VOCAL OF OPPOSITION ELEMENTS HAS BEEN GIVEN A STAKE IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM WHICH COULD ENCOURAGE THEM IN A MORE MODERATE AND CONSTRUCTIVE AS WELL AS CONSTITUTIONAL DIRECTION. WE ARE MODERATELY HOPEFUL THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN AND THAT ADMISSION TO UH WILL NOT SIMPLY BE USED TO PROVIDE IMMUNE FORUM FOR EXPOSITION OF EXTREME OPPOSITIONIST THEMES.

5. APPARENTLY SCRUPULOUS CONDUCT OF THIS ELECTION PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT AT A POINT WHEN PRESIDENT THIEU IS OFFERING HIS COMMUNIST ADVERSARIES AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUBSTITUTE ELECTORAL CONTEST FOR ARMED STRUGGLE AS A PATH TO POLITICAL POWER.

6. HIGH VOTE FOR MAU SLATE MAY BE INTERPRETED BY OPPOSITIONISTS IN VIETNAM AND SOME OF FOREIGN PRESS AS NATIONAL VOTE AGAINST GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT THIEU. WE DO NOT THINK THIS INTERPRETATION CAN STAND, NOT THE LEAST BECAUSE NEXT THREE SLATES WERE EITHER PRO-GVN (CAO AND LE) OR ON CONSTRUCTIVE TERMS WITH EXECUTIVE (HUYEN).

7. MAU'S ADVOCACY OF PEACE THEME CANNOT BE GIVEN UNDUE SIGNIFICANCE, SINCE PEACE WAS MOST POPULAR PHRASE IN CAMPAIGN LITERATURE OF ALL SLATES, AND MAU'S ESPOUSAL OF VAGUE UNDEFINED "PEOPLE'S PEACE" WAS NOT CLEAR CALL FOR ANY SPECIFIC POLICY DIRECTION. MAU'S CAMPAIGN DID BLAME ALL OF SVN'S CURRENT ILLS ON WAR AND DID ABSTAIN FROM ANTI-COMMUNIST ATTACKS, BUT ALSO CALLED FOR MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM WHILE

23 SAIGON 14255

Department of State **TELEGRAM**

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SAIGON 14255 01 OF 02 011633Z

BUILDING PEACE. COULD BE NOTED IN THIS REGARD THAT BOTH PRO-GVN CAO AND INDEPENDENT HUYEN ARE STAUNCH SUPPORTERS OF PRESIDENT THIEU'S PEACE POSITION.

8. ON THE WHOLE ELECTION WAS NOT ISSUE-ORIENTED, BUT RATHER DEPENDENT ON APPEAL OF PRESTIGIOUS INDIVIDUALS TO SPECIFIC BROAD GROUPS. ROLE OF RELIGIONS AGAIN PROVED PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT. [redacted] OUT STRONGLY [redacted] EVEN WITH CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL FRAGMENTATION OF CATHOLIC VOTE, AND SEVERE COMPETITION FROM ACTIVE CATHOLIC POLITICAL PARTIES. [redacted]. (FORMER PRIME MINISTER TRAN VAN HUONG MAY HAVE BEEN THE EXTRA ATTRACTION THAT SAVED HUYEN FROM DEFEAT BY MORE POLITICAL CATHOLIC LIST OF LE.)
BERGER

b-1 ed

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Department of State TELEGRAM

CONFIDENTIAL 314

PAGE 01 SAIGON 14255 02 OF 02 011355Z

42
ACTION ~~EA-15~~

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 UPW-01 AID-28 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
INR-08 L-04 NSAE-00 NSC-10 P-03 ~~RSC-01~~ PRS-01 SS-20
SSO-00 USIE-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 RSR-01 /113 W
013500

O R 011210Z SEP 70
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5341
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 14255/2

9. ELECTION WAS ALSO APPARENTLY A "TO GET THE RASCALS OUT"

EFFORT. TWO OF THE THREE WINNERS LED SUCCESSFUL SLATES IN 1967. IN ALL, 50 PERCENT OF THE INCUMBENT THREE-YEAR TERM SENATORS WHO SOUGHT REELECTION WILL BE RETURNED TO THE UH OR 11 OUT OF 22 (7 DID NOT RUN).

10. POSTURE OF THE NEW UH VIS-A-VIS GVN SHOULD N T BE DRASTICALLY DIFFERENT FROM CURRENT UH. OPPOSITION AND PRO-GVN FORCES SHOULD BE ABOUT EQUAL, AND INDEPENDENT STRENGTH SHOULD SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE. THE NUMBER OF CLEARLY OPPOSITIONIST SENATORS IN THE NEW UH SHOULD BE ABOUT 16, OR APPROXIMATELY SAME NUMBER OF MEMBERS AS THE OPPOSITION BLOC HEADED BY OUTGOING SENATOR TRAN VAN DON. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE ABILITIES OF PROBABLE NEW OPPOSITION LEADER VU VAN MAU, AND SOME OF HIS FOLLOWERS, OPPOSITION IN NEW UH MAY PROVE MORE COHESIVE, ORGAN-

CONFIDENTIAL

Department of State TELEGRAM

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAIGON 14255 02 OF 02 011355Z

IZED, VIGOROUS AND INVENTIVE THAN IN PAST.

11. PRO-GVN FORCES MAY BE SLIGHTLY REDUCED IN NEW UH. PRO-GVN BLOC OF DANG VAN SUNG LOST 13 OF ITS 19 MEMBERS TO 3-YEAR TERMS. REELECTION OF CAO SHOULD BRING IN 5 NEW PRO-GVN SENATORS AND RETURNS 5 INCUMBENT SUNG BLOC MEMBERS, SO SUNG GROUPING SHOULD ATTRACT AT LEAST 16 MEMBERS IN NEW UH. (FIVE INCUMBENT THREE-YEAR TERM PRO-GVN BLOC SENATORS FAILED IN REELECTION BIDS, TWO DID NOT SEEK REELECTION, AND ONE (PHAM VAN BA) RAN WITH HUYEN AND THUS PROBABLY HAS DEFECTED TO THE INDEPENDENTS.)

12. POWER AND INFLUENCE OF INDEPENDENTS, WHICH HAS 33% LARGEST OF UH THREE GROUPINGS, SHOULD INCREASE. CORE OF INDEPENDENTS IS HUYEN'S 1967 SLATE. INDEPENDENTS NUMBER 23 IN PRESENT UH, AND 17 OF THOSE ARE SIX-YEAR SENATORS. HUYEN'S REELECTION WILL RETURN TWO OF THE THREE-YEAR INDEPENDENTS AND BRING IN 8 NEW POTENTIAL INDEPENDENTS, SINCE IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT PARTICULARLY IN HUYEN'S CASE SLATE UNITY WILL BE MAINTAINED. INDEPENDENT GROUP COULD HAVE POTENTIAL MEMBERSHIP OF 26 SENATORS. (ALL CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING POTENTIAL BLOCK STRENGTH ARE TENTATIVE, SINCE BLOCS WILL RE-ORGANIZE WHEN THE NEW UH MEETS IN OCTOBER.)

13. SEVENTEEN OF THE THIRTY NEWLY ELECTED SENATORS ARE SOUTHERN (FROM HUYEN AND CAO LISTS), 7 ARE FROM THE CENTER (WITH MAU LIST MAKING LARGEST CONTRIBUTION TO THIS CATEGORY,) AND 6 ARE FROM NVN (EACH WINNING LIST CONTAINS TWO NORTHERNERS). TWELVE CATHOLICS AND 10 BUDDHISTS WERE ELECTED ALONG WITH A FEW MEMBERS OF SOME MINOR SECTS. WHEN REGIONAL AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF SIX-YEAR TERM SENATORS ELECTED IN 1967 ARE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION, NEW UH WHICH FORMS IN OCTOBER WILL BE SLIGHTLY MORE SOUTHERN AND CATHOLIC (29 SOUTHERNERS, 25 CATHOLICS) THAN NORTHERN AND BUDDHIST (22 NORTHERNERS, 19 KNOWN BUDDHISTS). UH ELECTED IN 1967 WAS MORE HEAVILY CATHOLIC THAN NEW UH WILL BE, AND NORTHERNERS HAD SLIGHT PREPONDERANCE OVER SOUTHERNERS.
BERGER

DECLASSIFIED